

(3) any other recommendations for updates to such section and the Bureau of Land Management's geothermal program.

(b) **CONSIDERATIONS.**—In developing the report required in subsection (a), the Secretary of the Interior shall solicit facts or information from the geothermal industry and other stakeholders.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 7422, the bill now under consideration.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 7422, the Geothermal Cost Recovery Authority Act of 2024 grants the Department of the Interior the authority to impose fees on geothermal leaseholders. The fees would cover costs related to geothermal lease applications, production and development plans, site licenses, permits, and approvals, as well as inspection and monitoring activities.

In 2022, BLM updated its regulations and created new geothermal cost recovery fees but did not include a fee for geothermal permits to drill. BLM argued that there is no mechanism under FLPMA to charge cost recovery fees for geothermal facilities like there is for wind and solar.

This bill would provide DOI with explicit authority to charge geothermal leaseholder fees to recover costs for geothermal lease applications and other approvals associated with exploration, drilling, construction, and operation of well sites.

As we have seen in the past, agencies have blamed slow permitting processes on a lack of funding. However, when Congress provided additional funding, permitting timelines did not improve, and taxpayer dollars were squandered.

I appreciate the changes made to the bill during the committee process to ensure fees charged under the legislation will be used explicitly for geothermal permitting. Reporting language was also included to better enable Congress to ensure these funds are used appropriately.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of my bill, H.R. 7422, the Geothermal Cost Recovery Authority Act of 2024. As colleagues on both sides of the aisle can agree, geothermal energy is an extremely promising and growing source of renewable energy.

Since the 1960s, geothermal energy has been used as a sustainable and reliable source of electricity, but even though it has grown significantly since then, it still only makes up less than half of one percent of our energy generation mix.

Fortunately, new breakthroughs in technology are massively expanding where geothermal energy can be developed. This is particularly exciting because of some of the unique benefits of geothermal energy for the clean energy transition.

Geothermal provides consistent baseload power, which is available 24/7 with minimal emissions. This complements the mix of solar, wind, and storage needed to build a clean grid and is crucial for maintaining stability in our energy systems, replacing dirty baseload energy like coal.

Many of the skills needed for geothermal development are directly transferrable from industries like oil and gas. As geothermal technologies advance, we will be able to site those power plants at places like retired coal plants where fossil fuel workers can find jobs.

Better yet, many of these fossil trades are already organized and unionized. Everyone from the laborers to the workers in the power plant control rooms, to the steamfitters, pipefitters, and operating engineers can find work in geothermal. Geothermal shows truly exciting promise to help union workers transition to a clean energy economy.

As all this growth occurs, the Federal Government will also have an important role to play. The Department of Energy is supporting pilot projects and advancements in technology. Within the jurisdiction of the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee, where I serve as ranking member, the Department of the Interior is often in charge of permitting.

In fact, the first renewable energy project sited on U.S. public lands back in 1978 was geothermal energy. Right now, nearly 70 percent of geothermal energy capacity is on federally managed Bureau of Land Management lands.

With the technological advancements we are seeing now, the Bureau of Land Management needs to be ready to scale up the deployment of this clean energy while remaining diligent about permitting responsibly, considering public input and respecting indigenous knowledge and Tribal consultation.

We have heard from geothermal developers that there can be challenges when it comes to permitting new geothermal plants. Much of that stems from capacity constraints, the need for more expertise or more staff in the right locations.

My bill, the Geothermal Cost Recovery Authority Act of 2024, will allow BLM the flexibility to charge companies cost recovery for things like inspections and monitoring, and my bill will enable BLM to hire third-party experts to help review permit applica-

tions. This flexibility will improve permitting capacity and timelines without sacrificing any of the important steps for environmental review and community input.

At a time when permitting is a contentious word in Washington, this bill shows both parties can come together around commonsense approaches to advance commonsense solutions.

I greatly appreciate my colleagues across the aisle who worked with us on the language in my bill, and I am excited to see it moving forward today, along with other positive bills for geothermal energy, like Congressman CURTIS' GEO Act.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, as part of an all-of-the-above approach to energy security, geothermal energy has great potential to help meet the United States' growing energy demands.

I appreciate Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ' work with my team to address concerns raised about H.R. 7422 during the committee's hearing and markup process. I yield back the balance of my time.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore (Mr. MOORE of Utah). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 7422, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

COASTAL HABITAT CONSERVATION ACT OF 2023

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2950) to authorize the Secretary of the Interior, through the Coastal Program of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, to work with willing partners and provide support to efforts to assess, protect, restore, and enhance important coastal landscapes that provide fish and wildlife habitat on which certain Federal trust species depend, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2950

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Coastal Habitat Conservation Act of 2023".

SEC. 2. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this Act is to legislatively authorize the Coastal Program of the Service in effect as of the date of the enactment of this Act to conduct collaborative landscape-level planning and on-the-ground coastal habitat assessment, coastal habitat protection, coastal habitat restoration, and coastal habitat enhancement projects in priority coastal landscapes to conserve and recover Federal trust species.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **COASTAL ECOSYSTEM.**—The term “coastal ecosystem” means a biological community of organisms interacting with each other and their habitats in a coastal landscape.

(2) **COASTAL HABITAT ASSESSMENT.**—The term “coastal habitat assessment” means the process of evaluating the physical, chemical, and biological function of a coastal site to determine the value of the site to fish and wildlife.

(3) **COASTAL HABITAT ENHANCEMENT.**—The term “coastal habitat enhancement” means the manipulation of the physical, chemical, or biological characteristics of a coastal ecosystem to increase or decrease specific biological functions that make the ecosystem valuable to fish and wildlife.

(4) **COASTAL HABITAT PLANNING.**—The term “coastal habitat planning” means the process of developing a comprehensive plan that—

(A) characterizes a coastal ecosystem;

(B) sets protection, restoration, or enhancement goals and identifies the priorities of those goals;

(C) describes conservation strategies and methodologies;

(D) establishes a timetable for implementation of the plan; and

(E) identifies roles of participants and stakeholders.

(5) **COASTAL HABITAT PROTECTION.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The term “coastal habitat protection” means a long-term action to safeguard habitat of value to fish and wildlife in a coastal ecosystem.

(B) **INCLUSION.**—The term “coastal habitat protection” includes activities to support establishment of a conservation easement or fee title acquisition by Federal and non-Federal partners.

(6) **COASTAL HABITAT RESTORATION.**—The term “coastal habitat restoration” means the manipulation of the physical, chemical, or biological characteristics of a coastal ecosystem with the goal of returning, to the maximum extent practicable, the full natural biological functions to lost or degraded native habitat.

(7) **COASTAL LANDSCAPE.**—The term “coastal landscape” means a portion of a coastal ecosystem within or adjacent to a coastal State that contains various habitat types, including—

(A) a fresh or saltwater wetland in a coastal watershed;

(B) a coastal river, stream, or waterway;

(C) a coastal bay or estuary;

(D) a seagrass bed, reef, or other nearshore marine habitat;

(E) a beach or dune system;

(F) a mangrove forest; and

(G) an associated coastal upland.

(8) **COASTAL STATE.**—The term “coastal State” means—

(A) a State in, or bordering on, the Atlantic, Pacific, or Arctic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, the Long Island Sound, or 1 or more of the Great Lakes;

(B) the District of Columbia;

(C) the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico;

(D) Guam;

(E) American Samoa;

(F) the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands;

(G) the Federated States of Micronesia;

(H) the Republic of the Marshall Islands;

(I) the Republic of Palau; and

(J) the United States Virgin Islands.

(9) **FEDERAL TRUST SPECIES.**—The term “Federal trust species” means migratory birds, threatened species or endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), interjurisdictional fish, and marine mammals for which the Secretary has management authority.

(10) **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.**—The term “financial assistance” means Federal funding provided to Federal, State, local, or Tribal governments, nongovernmental institutions, nonprofit

organizations, and private individuals and entities through a grant or cooperative agreement.

(11) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

(12) **SERVICE.**—The term “Service” means the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

(13) **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.**—The term “technical assistance” means a collaboration, facilitation, or consulting action relating to a coastal habitat planning, coastal habitat assessment, coastal habitat protection, coastal habitat restoration, or coastal habitat enhancement project or initiative in which the Service contributes scientific knowledge, skills, and expertise to the project or initiative.

SEC. 4. COASTAL PROGRAM.

The Secretary shall carry out the Coastal Program within the Service to—

(1) identify the leading threats to priority coastal landscapes and conservation actions to address those threats in partnership with Federal, State, local, and Tribal governments, nongovernmental institutions, nonprofit organizations, and private individuals and entities;

(2) provide technical assistance and financial assistance through partnerships with Federal, State, local, and Tribal governments, nongovernmental institutions, nonprofit organizations, and private individuals and entities to conduct voluntary coastal habitat planning, coastal habitat assessment, coastal habitat protection, coastal habitat restoration, and coastal habitat enhancement projects on public land or private land;

(3) ensure the health and resilience of coastal ecosystems through adaptive management procedures based on the best available science;

(4) build the capacity of Federal, State, local, and Tribal governments, nongovernmental institutions, nonprofit organizations, and private individuals and entities to carry out environmental conservation and stewardship measures;

(5) assist in the development and implementation of monitoring protocols to ensure the success of coastal ecosystem restoration and coastal ecosystem enhancement measures; and

(6) collaborate and share information with partners and the public relating to best management practices for the conservation, restoration, and enhancement of coastal ecosystems.

SEC. 5. REPORTS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Secretary, acting through the Director of the Service, shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations and Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committees on Appropriations and Environment and Public Works of the Senate, and make available to the public on the website of the Service, a report on the Coastal Program carried out under this Act.

(b) **REQUIREMENTS.**—Each report submitted under subsection (a) shall assess on regional and nationwide bases—

(1) Coastal Program work on coastal ecosystems;

(2) progress made by the Coastal Program toward identifying the leading threats to priority coastal landscapes and conservation actions to address those threats; and

(3) prospects for, and success of, protecting, restoring, and enhancing coastal ecosystems.

(c) **INCLUSIONS.**—Each report submitted under subsection (a) shall include—

(1) quantitative information on coastal landscapes protected, restored, or enhanced;

(2) funds appropriated to the Coastal Program that have been expended or leveraged;

(3) a description of adaptive management practices implemented; and

(4) a description of emerging challenges or data gaps that hinder the ability of the Coastal Program to achieve the purpose of this Act.

SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act \$16,957,000 for each of fiscal years 2024 through 2028.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2950, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Representative HUFFMAN's bill, the Coastal Habitat Conservation Act of 2023, congressionally authorizes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Program.

The Coastal Program was administratively created in 1984 and annually receives appropriations even though it has never been statutorily authorized. H.R. 2950 would address this currently unauthorized program and ensure that the Committee on Natural Resources has increased oversight.

Importantly, it would better enable the Committee on Natural Resources to make substantive changes to how the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administers the program should those changes be necessary.

The Coastal Program is a voluntary, partnership-based program that allows the Service to provide technical and financial assistance for habitat conservation in coastal watersheds. The committee has heard testimony that outlined the successes of this program, which has conserved nearly 3 million acres of priority habitat nationwide.

The bill brings greater congressional oversight over an important program for coastal habitat conservation. I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 2950, the Coastal Habitat Conservation Act, introduced by the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN), the Water, Wildlife and Fisheries Subcommittee ranking member.

This bill would provide statutory authority for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Program, including authorizing nearly \$17 million each year from fiscal year 2024 through 2028.

The Coastal Program is one of the Fish and Wildlife Service's most effective voluntary programs for restoring and protecting the habitat. It has helped coastal communities and their partners conserve and restore coastal ecosystems since 1985. These partnerships have benefited people, habitats, and wildlife in 24 priority coastal areas, including the Gulf of Mexico, Great Lakes, Caribbean, Atlantic Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean.

The program works to create resilient coastal ecosystems, support habitat connectivity, recover Federal trust in priority species, and promote community stewardship of fish and wildlife resources. It does so by providing both technical and financial assistance to States, Tribes, coastal communities, and conservation organizations for public and private lands.

This successful program has completed nearly 5,000 projects and collaborated with over 6,400 partners, with the outcome of protecting more than 2.3 million acres of habitat and improving land and water for the people and wildlife that live there.

Our country and our planet are facing a climate crisis and a biodiversity crisis, so efforts like these are essential.

Authorizing the Coastal Program through H.R. 2950 will enable the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to continue identifying threats to coastal landscapes, providing coastal habitat planning and assessments, ensuring restoration and protection for resilient coastlines, and developing capacity building between private and public partnerships.

I strongly support the Coastal Habitat Conservation Act and urge my colleagues to pass this bill. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Puerto Rico (Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN).

Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2950, the Coastal Habitat Conservation Act. I was proud to join Congressman HUFFMAN as the co-lead on this bipartisan bill, which would congressionally authorize the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program.

This program is one of the Service's most effective and proven initiatives, bringing together public and private partners on a voluntary basis to protect and improve coastal habitats and ecosystems across our Nation. These efforts are carried out throughout 24 priority coastal areas along the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Gulf of Mexico, the Great Lakes, and of course, the Caribbean.

In 2023, the Coastal Program worked with partners and local communities to implement 153 conservation projects across 19 States and territories, restoring and protecting more than 87,000 acres. This was accomplished by leveraging \$3 in partners' contributions for every Federal dollar invested in the program.

In the case of Puerto Rico, we have seen firsthand the success and the impact of this program. Between 2010 and 2021, the Coastal Program supported 218 voluntary-based projects on the island, which contributed to the restoration of almost 2,900 acres of habitat. These include projects to restore coastal dunes, wetlands, and mangrove forests. It also supported partnerships with local farmers to convert sun-

grown coffee farms into shade-grown coffee farms which help protect streams and coral reefs by reducing sources of sediment and nutrient pollution.

I trust that formally authorizing the Coastal Program, as H.R. 2950 seeks to do, will ensure it has the necessary tools to continue supporting similar locally driven conservation projects across our Nation, coastal States, and of course territories.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2950.

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN), the sponsor of this bill.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York and thank my colleagues for understanding the importance of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Program and for supporting this legislation to, for the first time, authorize it in statute.

Coastal conservation is not just about protecting our environment. It is about supporting a thriving economy. However, we do face serious threats—climate change, pollution, unsustainable development, and other threats—to our coastal habitats, causing rapid deterioration of these critical resources.

I want to be very clear: This is not a local issue. Over 53 percent of the United States population lives near coastal watersheds. These areas are home to 45 percent of federally listed threatened and endangered species. Over 60 million American jobs depend on the health of our coasts.

These coastal habitats are complex, dynamic, and they don't always fit neatly within the boundaries that often guide our conservation work. The Service's Coastal Program recognizes this, and it allows for management flexibility by providing technical and financial assistance for coastal land acquisitions. This helps the Service strategically conserve coastal habitat beyond the confines of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

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The Coastal Program has a great record of success. Since its inception in Chesapeake Bay in 1985, the program has expanded to 23 other priority coastal areas along the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and in the Gulf of Mexico, Great Lakes, and the Caribbean, including wetlands, estuaries, beaches, and mangrove forests.

Within these areas, the Service facilitates a voluntary, partnership-based relationship with coastal communities to conserve and restore coastal ecosystems and benefit fish, wildlife, and people alike.

While the Coastal Program is designed to help conserve and recover priority habitat in coastal areas, it can only be effective with adequate resources. That is why the Coastal Habitat Conservation Act of 2023 provides statutory authority to the program by

authorizing \$16.9 million annually over the next 5 fiscal years.

I am pleased that we are here supporting efforts to bring together people and private partners to voluntarily protect and improve coastal habitats. This is an approach that helps strike a balance between working landscapes and habitat conservation in our coastal communities.

With this bipartisan bill, we can ensure that this great program will continue to drive locally led conservation projects across coastal States and territories, preserving the health and resilience of coastal habitats to benefit the wildlife communities and economies that depend on them for generations to come.

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2950 authorizes the Coastal Program in a fiscally responsible manner and provides for increased congressional oversight and direction of the program.

By doing so, we, as Members of Congress, will be better able to fulfill our oversight responsibilities. At the same time, this program continues its work conserving coastal ecosystems for the benefit of species and our constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2950, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ELECTRONIC PERMITTING MODERNIZATION ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5509) to modernize permitting systems at the Department of the Interior, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5509

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Electronic Permitting Modernization Act".

SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR PERMIT ACCESSIBILITY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In order to improve the overall economy, efficiency, and management of operations and activities of the Department of the Interior (referred to in this section as the "Department"), reduce paperwork, and provide high-quality services and access to the public, the Secretary of the Interior shall, to the extent practicable—